

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2023

H.B. 589  
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HOUSE PRINCIPAL CLERK

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HOUSE BILL DRH30250-ND-32A

Short Title: Protect Whistleblower LEOs from Retaliation. (Public)

Sponsors: Representative Zenger.

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
2 AN ACT PROTECTING FROM RETALIATION LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS THAT  
3 REPORT THE USE OF EXCESSIVE FORCE OR OTHER IMPROPER OR UNLAWFUL  
4 ACTIVITY.

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

6 SECTION 1. G.S. 15A-401 reads as rewritten:

7 "§ 15A-401. Arrest by law-enforcement officer.

8 ...

9 (d1) Duty to Intervene and Report Excessive Use of Force. – A law enforcement officer,  
10 while in the line of duty, who observes another law enforcement officer use force against another  
11 person that the observing officer reasonably believes exceeds the amount of force authorized by  
12 subsection (d) of this section and who possesses a reasonable opportunity to intervene, shall, if  
13 it is safe to do so, attempt to intervene to prevent the use of excessive force. Additionally, the  
14 observing officer shall, within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 72 hours thereafter,  
15 report what the officer reasonably believes to be an unauthorized use of force to a superior law  
16 enforcement officer within the agency of the observing officer, even if the observing officer did  
17 not have a reasonable opportunity to intervene. If the head of the law enforcement agency of the  
18 observing officer was involved or present during what the observing officer reasonably believes  
19 to be unauthorized use of force, the observing officer shall make the report to the highest ranking  
20 law enforcement officer of that officer's agency who was not involved in or present during the  
21 use of force.

22 Making a knowingly false report under this subsection shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor.

23 (d2) Protection from Retaliation. – The observing officer reporting an alleged  
24 unauthorized use of force pursuant to subsection (d1) of this section shall not be terminated,  
25 disciplined, or otherwise retaliated against for making that report, provided that nothing in this  
26 subsection shall prohibit councils, supervisors, department heads, or other appropriate authorities  
27 from taking disciplinary action against the observing officer for conduct that occurred prior to  
28 making the report.

29 ...."

30 SECTION 2.(a) Article 1 of Chapter 17C of the General Statutes is amended by  
31 adding a new section to read:

32 "§ 17C-17. Duty to intervene and report certain conduct; protection from retaliation.

33 (a) A criminal justice officer, while in the line of duty, that observes any of the following  
34 conduct and possesses a reasonable opportunity to intervene shall, if it is safe to do so, attempt  
35 to intervene to prevent the continuation of the conduct:

36 (1) Violations of federal, State, city, or county laws, ordinances, or regulations.



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- 1           (2) Fraud.
- 2           (3) Misappropriation of State, city, or county resources.
- 3           (4) Activity that poses a substantial danger to public health and safety.
- 4           (5) Gross mismanagement, including the gross waste of public monies or the
- 5                 gross abuse of authority.

6           (b) A criminal justice officer that observes conduct the criminal justice officer reasonably  
7 believes to be conduct specified in subdivisions (1) through (5) of subsection (a) of this section  
8 shall, within a reasonable period of time not to exceed 72 hours after the conduct occurred, report  
9 the conduct to an immediate supervisor, department head, or appropriate authority, even if the  
10 criminal justice officer did not have a reasonable opportunity to intervene. If the immediate  
11 supervisor, department head, or appropriate authority was involved in or present during the  
12 observed conduct, the criminal justice officer shall make the report to the highest ranking  
13 supervisor, department head, or appropriate authority of the criminal justice officer's agency that  
14 was not involved in or present during the conduct.

15          (c) A criminal justice officer that makes a report pursuant to subsection (b) of this section  
16 shall not be terminated, disciplined, or otherwise retaliated against for making that report.

17          (d) Nothing in this section shall prohibit agencies, supervisors, department heads, or  
18 appropriate authorities from taking disciplinary action against a criminal justice officer for any  
19 violation, fraud, misappropriation, gross mismanagement, or other activity specified in  
20 subdivisions (1) through (5) of subsection (a) of this section that occurred prior to the criminal  
21 justice officer making a report under subsection (b) of this section.

22          (e) Making a knowingly false report under this section shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor."

23                 **SECTION 2.(b)** Article 2 of Chapter 17E of the General Statutes is amended by  
24 adding a new section to read:

25 **"§ 17E-17. Duty to intervene and report certain conduct; protection from retaliation.**

26          (a) A justice officer, while in the line of duty, that observes any of the following conduct  
27 and possesses a reasonable opportunity to intervene shall, if it is safe to do so, attempt to intervene  
28 to prevent the continuation of the conduct:

- 29           (1) Violations of federal, State, city, or county laws, ordinances, or regulations.
- 30           (2) Fraud.
- 31           (3) Misappropriation of State, city, or county resources.
- 32           (4) Activity that poses a substantial danger to public health and safety.
- 33           (5) Gross mismanagement, including the gross waste of public monies or the
- 34                 gross abuse of authority.

35          (b) A justice officer that observes conduct the justice officer reasonably believes to be  
36 conduct specified in subdivisions (1) through (5) of subsection (a) of this section shall, within a  
37 reasonable period of time not to exceed 72 hours after the conduct occurred, report the conduct  
38 to an immediate supervisor, department head, or appropriate authority, even if the justice officer  
39 did not have a reasonable opportunity to intervene. If the immediate supervisor, department head,  
40 or appropriate authority was involved in or present during the observed conduct, the justice  
41 officer shall make the report to the highest ranking supervisor, department head, or appropriate  
42 authority of the justice officer's agency that was not involved in or present during the conduct.

43          (c) A justice officer that makes a report pursuant to subsection (b) of this section shall  
44 not be terminated, disciplined, or otherwise retaliated against for making that report.

45          (d) Nothing in this section shall prohibit agencies, supervisors, department heads, or  
46 appropriate authorities from taking disciplinary action against a justice officer for any violation,  
47 fraud, misappropriation, gross mismanagement, or other activity specified in subdivisions (1)  
48 through (5) of subsection (a) of this section that occurred prior to the justice officer making a  
49 report under subsection (b) of this section.

50          (e) Making a knowingly false report under this section shall be a Class 2 misdemeanor."

1                   **SECTION 3.** This act becomes effective December 1, 2023, and applies to offenses  
2 committed and retaliatory actions taken on or after that date.